DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 327 846 CS 212 385

AUTHOR Jones, Barbara; And Others
TITLE Writing: Parents and Children at Work.
PUB DATE May 90
NOTE 93p.; Project supported by an ART Grant from William Paterson College. Some words may not be completely legible because of broken type.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Education; Grade 2; Grade 4; *Parent Attitudes; Parent Education; *Parent Participation; Parent Student Relationship; Surveys; *Writing Attitudes; *Writing Instruction; *Writing Processes; Writing Research; *Writing Workshops
IDENTIFIERS Childrens Writing; Writing Development

ABSTRACT

A 7 month study evaluated a parent education program designed to inform parents of second- and fourth-graders about the writing process and the teaching of writing. A secondary goal was to evaluate the effect of teaching writing as a process upon the children's attitudes toward writing. The participants (37 parents, 15 second-graders, and 17 fourth-graders) responded to two attitude instruments (one for parents; one for children) as pre- and post-program measures. Two writing workshops for parents were offered in the evening while the children participated in writing workshops during the school day. Newsletters summarizing the main points of the workshops were sent home to reach those who could not attend. Both parents and children wrote original pieces which were published and shared at a "Celebrate Writing" night. The pre- and post-surveys showed no significant changes in the parents' attitudes; it appeared they were knowledgeable and had positive attitudes toward the process approach from the start. There were changes noted for the children. The second-graders showed a significant gain in their willingness to revise; select their own topics; and write letters, journals, and stories. The fourth-graders reported revising more often and were more interested in writing stories and notes. (Appendixes include the Writing Attitude Scale for Parents, Writing Attitude Scale for Students, Appraisal Survey by Parents, invitations to parents, writing workshop newsletter, and eight tables of data. Nineteen references are attached.) (Author/MG)

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Writing: Parents and Children at Work

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May, 1990

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Abstract

The purpose of this seven-month study was to evaluate a parent education program designed to inform parents of second- and fourth-graders about the writing process and the teaching of writing. A secondary goal was to evaluate the effect of teaching writing as a process upon the children's attitudes toward writing. The participants (37 parents, 15 second-graders, and 17 fourth-graders) responded to two attitude instruments (one forparents; one for children) as pre- and post-program measures. Two writing workshops for parents were offered in the evening while the children participated in writing workshops during the school day. Newsletters summarizing the main points of the workshops were sent home to reach those who couldn't attend. Both parents and children wrote original pieces which were published and shared at a "Celebrate Writing" night.

The pre- and post-surveys showed no big changes in the parents' attitudes; it appears they were knowledgeable and had positive attitudes toward the process approach from the start. There were changes noted for the children. The second-graders showed a significant gain in their willingness to revise, select their own topics, and write letters, journals, and stories. The fourth-graders reported revising more often and were more interested in writing stories and "notes." Recommendations for teachers, administrators, and parents are offered.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1 The Problem.....3
Statement of the Problem.....4
Definitions.....5
Limitations.....6
Significance of the Study.....7

CHAPTER 2 Review of the Literature.....8
The Writing Process.....8
Children's Attitudes Towards Writing.....12
Parent Involvement.....16

CHAPTER 3 Methods and Procedures.....24
Setting and Sample.....24
Population.....26
Subjects.....26
Instruments.....28
Procedures.....30
Treatment of the Data.....33
Summary.....33

CHAPTER 4 Results.....34
Results and Discussion: Children's Responses.....35
Attitudes Toward Uses of Writing.....36
Attitudes Toward the Writing Process.....41
Results and Discussion: Parents' Responses.....46
Uses of Writing.....46
Perceptions of Self as Writers.....49
Perceptions of How Writing Should Be Taught.....49
Perceptions of Child's Writing.....51
Evaluation of Program Components.....53
Conclusions.....57

CHAPTER 5 Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations...59
Summary.....59
Conclusions.....59
Recommendations.....62
To Teachers.....62
To Administrators.....63
To Parents.....64
REFERENCES.....65
APPENDIX.....68

CHAPTER 1

The Problem

According to researcher and author, Lucy Calkins, "Human beings have a deep need to represent their experience through writing" (1986, p. 3). Donald Graves's research of children entering school confirms Calkins's assertion. He found that 90% of the children believed they could write (1983, p. 184). However, in the past, we, the authors of this study, did not observe a positive attitude toward writing in many of our second and fourth grade students. It was more common for us to hear, "I don't know what to write" or "Do we hafta?" when a writing lesson began. In our search for a better way to teach writing, we learned about the process of writing from the works of Graves, Calkins and others.

One of the purposes of this project is to study the attitudes of children and their parents toward writing. Parents are included in this study because we believe students bring many family experiences and attitudes to school and use these as a basis for new learning. We also find that parents usually are eager to learn how they can help their children succeed in school.

Statement of the Problem

This project was designed to inform parents about the writing process and the teaching of writing. The problem to be addressed is whether an education program affected the attitudes of parents toward writing and the teaching of writing. Another objective was also to learn whether children's attitudes toward writing change because of their participation in a writing workshop. Specifically, we sought answer these questions:

Will the attitudes of parents toward their uses of writing change?

Will parent attitudes toward the teaching of writing change?

Will parent perceptions of their children's writing change?

How will parents evaluate the components of the parent education program?

Will the student attitudes toward their uses of writing change?

Will the attitudes of students toward the writing process change?

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the terms listed below are defined as follows:

1. Audience- A group of readers for which a piece of writing is intended.
2. Author's Day- A specific day when students' published stories and poems are presented to an invited audience of parents, teachers and/or peers.
3. Conference- Usually, a one-to-one dialogue between a writer and the teacher or another student. The responder's role is to listen, tell what was learned, and then ask questions, if necessary. A conference may also be conducted during a whole class meeting.
4. Teacher-led instruction- The teacher makes all decisions on how and when the learning will take place.
5. Writing Workshop-an environment organized to support writers as they make decisions about their writing.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this study. The study is limited to one second grade and one fourth grade class in a suburban-rural community in northwest New Jersey; therefore, the sample size is relatively small. There are 15 second graders and 17 fourth graders for a total of 30 families. (Two families have both a second and a fourth grader participating in the study.) Results are generalized only to samples drawn from similar populations.

It was difficult to ascertain the effect of the two major components of the parent education program, the workshops and the newsletters. A little more than half of the families attended one or both of the parent workshops. Fourteen families attended the first in October with five of the original group and two new families attending the second in February. Although the newsletters were sent home to inform those who didn't attend, there was no way of knowing whether or not the parents read them. These factors affect the internal validity of this study.

It was difficult to determine whether the results of the surveys administered to the parents and the children represented their "true" feelings or those they expected the teachers wanted to hear. Another difficulty was determining

whether the children correctly comprehended the survey questions.

Significance of the Study

We expect that many of the parents' experiences with learning to write included mostly teacher-led instruction. In the past, the teacher usually chose the topic and assigned it on Monday. The final copy was due on Wednesday. The teacher then collected the completed papers, marked and returned them on Friday. Progress was reflected in the increasing and decreasing numbers of red marks on the paper. Often adults refer to the frustrations and negative feelings they have toward writing as a result of these experiences.

For this reason it is of particular importance that our students and parents are given opportunities to learn the process of writing. The parents' attitudes and experiences with the writing process hopefully will affect how they think about writing and how they will help their children in the future. The students' attitudes toward writing will affect how and when they may use writing in all areas of their lives.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

This project is concerned with the attitudes of parents and their children toward writing. We begin with a review of the literature that pertains to writing and the teaching of writing.

The Writing Process

Lucy Calkins describes the writing process as a "dialogue between the writer and the emerging text" (1986, p.19). She emphasizes that the writing process does not consist of discrete steps (1986). Graves (1983) explains this process as the writer moving back and forth between the stages "until the words match that inner 'yes' feeling" (p. 220).

While writing may not be done in a step-by-step manner, there are stages to the process. Atwell (1987), Graves (1983), Calkins (1986) designate the beginning or pre-writing stage of writing as a rehearsal. It can include such activities as "daydreaming, sketching, doodling, making lists of words, outlining, reading, conversing, or even writing lines as a foil to further rehearsal" (Graves, 1983, p. 221).

Graves (1983) calls the next stage of the writing process "composing." Atwell (1967) and Calkins (1986) refer to this stage of placing words on paper as "drafting." The writer may continue to draft or compose until a final copy is completed or published.

At the revision stage the writer reviews what has been written and decides where the writing will go next. It is during this stage that the writer alternates between being a reader and a writer (Calkins, 1986). Information may be added, deleted, or simply moved around.

Editing is the last stage before publication or completion of a final draft. This is when the writer prepares the text for other readers. Writers edit "to prevent errors or awkwardness that will distract readers and interfere with meaning" (Atwell, 1987, p. 106).

In her book The Art of Teaching Writing, Lucy Calkins stresses the importance of recognizing the student's ownership and responsibilty for his or her writing (1986). Donald Graves agrees and adds that children learn when they have opportunities to make decisions about their writing (1983). Both Nancy Atwell and Lucy Calkins use Donald Graves's idea of a workshop for writers, much like that of an art studio (Graves, 1983). A writing workshop provides

a predictable environment in which writers' supplies, such paper, pens, pencils, books, etc. and procedures are readily available to students (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983).

Writing workshops often begin with a meeting of the entire class, during which time the teacher presents a mini-lesson (Calkins, 1986, p.26). Calkins developed the five minute mini-lesson to provide "ways to add information to the class pot" (1986, p. 170). A mini-lesson might include: a writing tip, a revision strategy, a new classroom procedure, or an example of good writing.

After a mini-lesson, students are given the time to draft, revise, edit, and confer with their peers and/or the teacher (Calkins, 1986). The writing workshop usually ends with a whole class meeting (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983). This is the time for individuals to share writing problems or triumphs.

Writers need an audience (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983). Atwell (1987), Calkins (1986), and Graves (1983) recommend writing conferences be conducted between student and teacher, student and student as a means of helping children discover what they don't yet know and build on what they do know about their writing. Both Calkins (1986, p.21) and Graves (1983, p. 8) point to the writing conference as the heart of teaching writing as a process.

Researchers find that publishing is crucial to the development of young writers (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983; Routman 1988). When students publish their writing, they have opportunities to share their texts with an audience other than the teacher. Another benefit of publishing is that young writers begin to perceive themselves as authors. Teachers can reinforce this idea of "I am a writer" by treating student authored books the same as books written by professional writers (Graves, 1983; Routman, 1988).

In many of the classrooms that Calkins visited, writing was celebrated on an "Author's Day" (1986). She recommended that Author's Day be held frequently and regularly. Atwell likewise advocates frequent but also on-going publishing (1987). Atwell discovered 18 ways that her students "have gone public", such as: class magazines, submissions to local newspapers, petitions, and writing contests (p. 265-266).

From Reggie Routman's experiences as a professional writer and as a teacher of writing, it is her belief that "If students feel valued, encouraged, and supported, they will take on all that is necessary to develop their natural writing abilities" (1988, p. 118).

Children's Attitudes Towards Writing

Children have always been creative in the ways they express themselves in writing. Walls, desk, tables and paper may be used as a surface for experimentation with pens, pencils, magic markers, chalk, and crayons. From the crude drawings of the caveman up to the present time, stories have been written in unique ways. (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983).

Students come to school with the perception that they can write. After all, haven't they been writing at home? Often the emphasis in school is put on the correctness of the work and not the creative flow of words (Graves, 1983). When first-grade children begin writing they are concerned with spelling. The teacher can put those fears to rest by encouraging them to write freely and use invented spelling. In an atmosphere that encourages risk taking and allows the children to make mistakes, students feel comfortable with writing. Even at first grade level you can use group sharing which provides a meaningful audience for the authors (Hauser, 1982).

The anxiety over writing ability interferes with learning. Studies have shown that by acquainting students

with the writing process you not only reduce writing apprehension but can produce good writing by all students (Smith, 1984).

Writing journals helps to keep writing flowing and is a good way to encourage positive dialogue between teachers and students (Tway, 1984). A study conducted with fifth grade students found that journal writing gives students the freedom to write in an unthreatening atmosphere.

Research done by Lucy Calkins and Donald Graves confirm the changes in both the teachers and the students attitude towards writing as a result of the writing process (1986, 1983). Children's attitudes about writing and themselves change as they begin to view themselves as writers. They become experts on what they know. A sense of community is developed as children write and share their ideas (Church, 1985).

Writing workshop provides that personal touch which allows the children to write about what is real and alive to them (Calkins, 1986). It is in this positive atmosphere that the writing workshop begins. The teacher becomes a facilitator, resource guide, listener, encourager rather than an arbitrator of correctness, a grader, and assigner of

value, a judge, jury, or prosecutor (Bennett, 1981). A climate of trust in classrooms must be created and developed. As teachers respond positively to students' writing, this will motivate children to write more. (1986). Support for establishing an atmosphere of trust is reflected in studies conducted in ninth grade on students' attitudes towards writing and peer conferences. The researchers' findings showed that experimental groups showed more positive attitudes toward writing than did comparison groups. A suggestion for writing teachers would be to use peer evaluation groups to develop positive attitudes towards writing (Kastra, Tolleson and Gilbert 1987).

Donald Graves in Writing: Teachers And Children At Work set up principles which are important in creating a classroom climate which will be reflected in children's attitudes and the manner in which they respond to writing situations. Time is essential to teaching writing. Teachers are urged to provide students with the time to write regularly and on a predictable schedule (Atwell, 1987 , Calkins, 1986, Graves, 1983, Routman, 1988). This gives writer's an opportunity to anticipate writing and plan accordingly (Calkins, 1986, p.25).

Children are given the responsibility in choosing their topic while discovering their subject and information (Graves, 1983 p. 17). Any misunderstanding that writing workshop is a free-for-all must be dispelled. As Donald Graves states it is essential for the teacher to set up firm guidelines. A few suggestions are given: "Please do not disturb while I'm writing. You talk your topic over with your neighbor. This is the time for everyone to write. Only two or three may share their pieces. Give your full attention to the person speaking. Writing is kept in your own personal folder in a special place. Tomorrow is another day for sharing our work, yours and mine" (p. 17).

Educators using the writing process agree on the built-in structure. Once again Lucy Calkins sums up this idea with, " How we structure the workshop is less important than that we structure it ." (p. 26). It is through this workshop approach that students learn to interact with their own writing and build up their confidence (p.21).

An attitude study was conducted on writng in the Oak Ridge School District in Tennessee over a three year period (Krendl, 1987). The study evaluated writing samples from

90 students in grades three through twelve. At the end of each year questionaires were sent to parents, students and teachers about writing attitudes. Results from the student survey show an increase over the second and third year in students' interest in learning about writing. Their level of confidence in writing had increased substantially and they felt more comfortable about writing. Students at each grade level were better writers than were previous students at that grade level. Lucy Calkins and Donald Graves in their research found that the writing process instilled confidence and self esteem in their students. Also, students exposed to the writing process enjoy writing and have more confidence in their writing ability (Hernandez, 1987).

Research indicates teaching writing as a process has a very positive influence on young writers.

Parent Involvement

There is growing support for recognition of the parents' role as coeducators and the integral part they play in a child's education (Graves, 1983; Henderson, 1988; Petit, 1980; Potter, 1989; Rasinski & Fredericks, 1989; Routman, 1988). Potter (1989) points to the fact that it is

the parent who is the child's first and most consistent teacher throughout the child's lifetime. However, he emphasizes the concept of parents as "coeducators" because "education cannot be left to the parent any more than it can be left to the teacher" (p.23).

The results of a study completed by the National Committeee for Citizens in Education (NCCE) in 1981 and updated in 1987 provides evidence about the importance of parent involvement (cited in Henderson, 1989). According to these studies, student achievement improved and continued to improve whenever parents helped their children (Henderson, 1988). "For example, low-income and minority graduates of preschool programs with high levels of parent involvement are still outperforming their peers when they reach high school" (Henderson, 1989, p. 149). Henderson concluded that the family, not the school, had the most profound effect on the attitudes of students toward achievement.

On the other hand, Potter (1989) contends that anyone who works with children affects both the children and their families. Potter is not alone when he advises teachers to accept the responsibility of working with parents and, in fact, to make it a high priority (Graves, 1983; Henderson, 1988; Rasinski & Fredericks, 1989; Routman,1988). If

teachers are to accept this challenge, then the next step is to find the ways and means to gain parent involvement.

Regie Routman (1988), in the early pages of her book, Transitions, made a commitment to communicate with parents regularly and invited them to be part of the educational process. She stated her belief in the rights and need of parents to be involved in their child's education. Her commitment to this goal began at the start of the school year when she established an environment that encouraged collaboration between parents and teachers as educational partners. There were individual parent meetings as well as requests for parent volunteers to work with young writers in the classroom. In addition, she provided parents with an explanation of her goals and objectives for teaching writing.

Rasinski and Fredericks (1989) suggest specific guidelines for beginning a parent involvement program:

1. Involve parents from planning to implementation.
2. Involve other school personnel.
3. Ensure that there is leadership and that it is shared with parents as well as teachers and other school personal.
4. Plan for the long term.
5. Evaluate the program periodically. (p.85)

David Petit (cited in Potter, 1980) suggests that there are three levels of parent participation. The first he

calls "monitoring" is accomplished through one to one encounters with the teacher by means of notes, conferences, and informal conversations. Likewise, Graves (1983) considers these opportunities for teachers and parents to share information about the child. Graves also contends that the more the teacher shares, the more information and support will be provided by the parent (p. 118).

It is at the second level that Petit (cited in Potter, 1980) makes a variety of suggestions to "inform" parents of organizational procedures, policies, goals, and classroom actvities. Parents can be informed through bulletin boards, reporting, parent-teacher conferences, home visits by teachers, or written communications, such as newsletters, calendars, class notes, and the like.

For example, when Kay Collas (1987), a junior primary teacher in Australia, and her colleagues began teaching writing as a process, they were ever mindful of the parents' high academic expectations for their children. The teachers were concerned with the reactions of parents to the children's use of invented spelling as well as their expectations of the established traditional teaching methods. Because the teachers knew parents needed to be informed and reassured about the change from the familiar

teacher-led instruction to a child-centered approach, they held parent meetings to present and discuss the reasons for the change.

Two years later, parent education continued to be an on-going facet of the language arts program. According to Collas, it was through class meetings and individual interviews that parents received the information and help they needed to understand their child's activities in school. At those times, parents had opportunities to ask questions and express concerns. No parent attitude survey was administered. However, the author asserts that it was the children's enthusiasm and progress in reading and writing that reassured the parents (p. 176).

At the third or "participation" level, Petit (cited in Potter, 1988) suggests that both parent and teacher must feel confident. At this stage the parent is invited into the classroom. "From there, parents' knowledge and skills can be extended by a process that may include observation by parents, the instruction of parents, parents' practical assistance in organizing and implementing programs and/or parents participating in planning" (cited in Potter, p.82).

According to Donald Graves (1983) one of the five common questions that parents ask about writing is how they

can help their children at home. He bases his recommendation on Mary Ellen Giacobbe's experiences as a first grade teacher in Atkinson, New Hampshire. It is her contention that parents should help with the writing program during the school day. Giacobbe maintains that this is an opportunity for parents to observe the teacher conducting conferences. With the teacher as a model, parents learn how to respond to their children's writing in a way that is consistent with what is done in school (P.315).

Reggie Routman (1988), like Mary Ellen Giacobbe, prefers to have parents work in the classroom during writing time. She too felt that this gave parents an opportunity to understand what was done in school and allowed them to carry this knowledge back home. As volunteers, parents were trained to publish the children's writings and to give one-to-one guidance and instruction. Of particular interest was the author's inclusion of parent reactions to working with children and their writing.

According to parent volunteer, Karan Shelley, "'My experience with publishing children's books has transformed the way I regard volunteer work, adult-child projects, and student-teacher relationships'" (p. 110).

Parent volunteer, Marianne Sopko's reaction, to her first grader's learning to write was, " I have learned so much about the writing process from Mike's work. He illustrates how much a child has to say if he is given a way to do it even when his control of the mechanics is shaky " (p. 112).

While Routman knew the progress the children made since she began teaching writing as a process, she also sought parent reactions to the program. At the back of each child's published book, Routman provided a page for written comments by parents and classmates. Once again she demonstrated her belief that it is the school's job "...to bring these families into the educational system by making them feel they are a welcome and necessary part of the learning process" (1988, p.160).

The literature reviewed clearly establishes a connection between teaching writing as a process and children's attitudes toward writing. The literature also calls for a partnership of the school and the community. Therefore, because most parents are unaware of how we teach their children the writing process, there is a need to carefully plan a parent participation program. It is

evident that we, the teachers, should welcome parents to participate in their child's learning process.

CHAPTER 3

Methods and Procedures

The purpose of this study was to evaluate a program designed to inform parents about the writing process and the teaching of writing. A secondary goal was to evaluate the effect of teaching writing as a process on their children's attitudes towards writing. Involving parents in a writing workshop provided a hands-on way to show them how the writing process is taught to their children. Sending home newsletters explaining the process with samples of children's writing used as examples of drafts at different stages was also part of the Parent Evaluation Program (PEP). The second and fourth grade children were exposed to writing workshop regularly throughout the school year.

Setting and Sample

Rockaway Township is a suburban community located in northwestern Morris County, New Jersey. Only forty-five minutes from New York City, the district offers its 20,000 residents close proximity to the cultural and other attractions of the metropolis as well as the benefits of country living.

The area provides many recreational facilities. The lakes and streams are popular with swimming, boating, and fishing enthusiasts. Campers and hunters are attracted by the extensive wooded areas. The nearby ski slopes provide excellent facilities for skiing fans.

Approximately 2100 students are enrolled in the district's six schools. Five schools are organized as elementary schools, including kindergarten through sixth grade. The one middle school houses grades seven and eight. Students in grades nine through twelve attend one of the two regional high schools operated by the Morris Hills Regional High School District. For state monitoring purposes, demographically the district is considered Suburban-Rural (SR) and being rapidly developed but still with large tracts of open land available for development. The District Factor Grouping (A-J) designation of the community indicating the Socio-Economic Status is H which puts it among the more affluent areas. The district currently spends $6,333.26 annually per pupil.

Population

The population in this study was the second and fourth grade classes in one elementary school in this district. The second grades are self contained classrooms with heterogeneous grouping. In the fourth grades, while the students are grouped homogeneously for math and reading, they are grouped heterogeneously for homeroom, science, social studies, spelling, and language arts.

Subjects

The total group consisted of 15 second grade students, 17 fourth grade students, and their parents. The student sample was comprised of 15 females and 17 males. The parent sample included 13 males and 24 females, for whom complete data were collected. See tables 1 and 2 for distribution of subjects.

Table 1

Distribution of Subjects: Parents

N= 37

	Fathers	Mothers	Total
Grade 2	5	14	19
Grade 4	8	10	18
Total	13	24	37

Table 2

Distribution of Subjects: Children

N= 32

	Boys	Girls	Total
Grade 2	9	6	15
Grade 4	8	9	17
Total	17	15	32

Instruments

The instruments used in this evaluation study were two attitude scales (parents' and children's) and a post-program form for parents to evaluate program components.

Attitude Survey

To assess attitudes toward writing, two scales (one for parents and one for children) were adapted from two instruments located in the literature: the Emig-King, (1977) Writing Attitude Scales for Students and Teachers and the Writing Apprehension Test (Selfe, C. 1986).

Emig-King Writing Attitude Scale for Students (E. K. WASS) contains forty items used with high school students and the Teacher Attitude Scale (E. K. WAST) contains fifty items used with high school teachers. Items are grouped into three categories: preference for writing, perception of writing and process of writing (Emig-King, 1977).

The original scale was used in a 1977-1978 study of the New Jersey Writing Project. Sixteen hundred students participated in this study. The E. K. WAST was validated by graduate students majoring in English education and secondary teachers of English. Experts who reviewed the E. K. WAST in the Research Instruments Project monograph, Measures for Research and Evaluation in the English Language Arts, Volume 2, attest to its reliability and validity.

Writing Apprehension Test is a twenty-six item test which includes statements about writing anxiety that may be clustered into three groupings: 1- students' confidence in the process and product of composing; 2- students' attitudes toward the evaluation of writing; and 3- students' enjoyment of writing. It has been used widely to assess change in older students' attitudes toward writing (Selfe, 1986; Feeley, 1987).

Parent Attitude Scale (PAS) items were taken from the Emig-King Writing Attitude Scale for Teachers and the Writing Apprehension Test. Our PAS consisted of thirty-seven items compared to the fifty items on the E.K.WAST and twenty-six on the WAT. Items were written in language more suitable for adults and grouped into four categories: attitude toward the use of writing, perception of self as a writer, perception of how writing should be taught, and perception of their child's writing. Eighteen items were taken from E.K. WAST, and seven items came from the WAT. A four point scale of Almost always = 4; Often = 3; Sometimes = 2; and Almost never = 1 was used in figuring the mean and standard deviation for each item in each cluster (see Appendix A).

Student Attitude Scale (SAS) was adapted for use with elementary school children. For our purpose the forty items on the Emig-King Writing Attitude Scale for Students were consolidated into 14 items with nine items reworded so that young children would understand them. This Student Attitude Scale was clustered into two categories: students' attitudes toward uses of writing and attitudes toward the writing process (see Appendix B).

Program Evaluation Form (PEF)

This appraisal survey was used to evaluate our efforts to inform parents about our writing program. Parents commented on the usefulness of the writing workshops and newsletters again responding on a four point scale: Parents were asked if they found each component to be Very helpful = 4; Helpful = 3; Some help = 2; Of no help = 1. (see Appendix C).

Procedures

This study was conducted from October 1989, to April 1990. The Student Attitude Surveys were administered by the classroom teachers to the second and fourth grade students in September as a pre-program measure. Each item was read orally by the teacher to the second grade students while the fourth graders responded independently. An overview of the writing program was presented to the parents at back-to-school night. Parents were given the Parent Attitude Surveys at this time. Some parents filled them out that night while others returned them at a later date. Twenty-one fourth grade parents and nineteen second grade parents returned the pre-surveys in the fall.

On the evening of October 17, 1989, parents were invited to participate in their first writing workshop (see Appendix D). The parents were taken through the writing process starting with topic selection, sharing ideas and then first drafts. They took their pieces home in a folder to revise and were requested to bring them back for a February workshop. This workshop was followed by a newsletter called "News and Notes from a Writing Workshop" which explained various aspects of the writing process (see Appendix E). "News and Notes" was a way of informing parents who were unable to attend the writing workshop about what was happening in the writing workshop. In January, the parents had an opportunity to see samples of their children's writing in "News and Notes". They were encouraged to work on their drafts.

During this time students were involved three days a week in writing workshop for forty minutes a day. They were exposed to the stages of the writing process which are: pre-writing/rehearsal, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. They kept folders and wrote from their own topics lists. Most of the second graders wrote two or three drafts before publishing. The whole class was involved in the publishing a book. The fourth graders wrote several drafts before publishing their individual picture books which were written for a kindergarten audience.

Parents were invited to attend a second workshop in February (see Appendix F). On the evening of February 13, 1990 they came with their drafts, learned the art of conferencing, and shared ideas with each other. After this workshop we asked them to complete their pieces and return them to us by March 1, 1990. Editing and typing would be completed by the teachers. Our objective was to have an edited piece published in our parents' collection.

April 3, 1990, our Celebrate Writing Program was a red letter evening not only for students but for parents as well. Thirty-two students read their pieces to an audience of about 100 people. Fourteen participants in the parents writing workshop finished their final drafts. These parents experienced the joy of authorship when they received their book of published stories called A Super Selection of Stories. "Star Wars", "Help Wanted", and "No Pets Allowed" were a few of the titles in the parent book.

At the celebration, parents were asked to complete the attitude surveys again as a post-program measure. They also completed the Program Evaluation forms. A total of forty-eight parent forms were returned in April. Students completed their post-program attitude survey in school on April 4, 1990.

Treatment of the Data

Since the items in the two (parent and children) attitude scales were not clustered by statistical procedures but rather by the investigators, based on consensus, cluster means were not computed. Instead, means and standard deviations for each item in each cluster were generated and tabled to answer descriptively questions raised in Chapter 1.

As for the Program Evaluation form, means and standard deviations for the parent program components were generated and labeled so that they might be discussed descriptively.

Summary

This chapter described the methods and procedures used to evaluate a program designed to inform parents about writing and the writing process. A secondary goal was to evaluate the effect of teaching writing as a process on their children's attitudes towards writing. Setting and sample, the instruments that were used and procedures were discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The purpose of this project was to study the attitudes of second and fourth grade children and their parents toward writing, before and after learning about writing through a process approach. Specifically, we sought to learn whether a parent education program would affect the attitudes of parents toward the uses of writing, the teaching of writing, and their children's writing. We also wanted to learn whether the attitudes of students toward the uses of writing and the writing process would change after participating in at least three writing workshops a week.

The parents were invited to attend two parent writing workshops and received three newsletters that reviewed what had occurred at the workshops, as well as suggested ways parents might encourage writing at home. By March, the children and some of the parents had completed drafts that were ready to publish. In April, an Author's Day was held to celebrate their writing.

To learn whether attitudes toward the writing process and the uses of writing changed, the children and parents were asked to complete attitude surveys in September, 1989 and again in April, 1990. The parent survey also included questions on how the parent perceived his/her child's writing and how writing should be taught. In addition, the parents were asked to evaluate the workshops and the newsletters. The answers were rated on a four-point scale.

To assess any changes in the attitudes of the children and parents, the mean and standard deviations for each question of the pre-program surveys and the post-program surveys were calculated. Related items then were grouped and categorized and reported in tables so that comparisions could be made. The results will be discussed under two broad headings: Children's Attitudes and Parent's Attitudes.

Results and Discussion: Children's Responses

The children's perceptions of their uses of writing and the writing process will be reported and discussed by the two grade levels.

Attitudes toward Uses of Writing

Second Grade. As seen in Table 3, second graders made significant changes in their uses of writing. While there remains a question as to whether the majority of second graders understood the item that asked about keeping a journal at home, it is obvious that they were affected by the daily use of journals in school since they went from 1.4 (Almost never) to 3. 0 (Often) on this item. They learned what a journal is and how to use it. In addition, some of the children kept notes about their weekend activities, brought them to school on Mondays, and recorded this information in their journals .

The increased interest in letter (2.5) and story writing (2.5) may also be linked to in-school activities. Many letters and thank you notes were written and sent to a variety of people for various reasons. The audiences included pen pals, family members, and classroom guests. This effort to provide an audience other than the teacher is supported by the findings of researchers Atwell (1987), Calkins (1986), and Graves (1983).

Table 3

Attitudes toward Uses of Writing: Second Grade Students

N=15

	Pre-Program		Post-Program	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I write letters...	1.9	(.74)	2.5	(.92)
I write stories...	2.0	(1.1)	2.5	(1.1)
Writing helps me learn	3.4	(.86)	3.6	(.63)
Writing helps me express my feelings	3.1	(.96)	3.5	(.74)
Like to write rather than read	2.7	(1.3)	2.1	(1.0)
Leave notes...	2.1	(1.2)	2.3	(1.1)
Keep a journal...	1.4	(.91)	3.0	(1.2)

(Almost always = 4; Often = 3; Sometimes = 2; Almost never = 1)

These second graders had many opportunities to choose their own topics for stories. In addition, three students wrote stories at home and brought them to school.

While the second graders recognized both before (3.1) and after (3.5) that writing helped them to express their feelings, it is difficult to know for sure why they indicated a less positive view toward writing than reading in April (2.1) than in September (2.7). One possible explanation is that by this time of the year reading had become "easy" for them. Leisure reading was encouraged both in school and at home and most of the children became independent readers. One hypothesis is that they simply may be enjoying their success.

Fourth Grade. The fourth graders' largest positive change, as shown in Table 4, was the increase of notes left for family and friends which went from 2.4 (Sometimes) to 3.0 (Often). Use of all other item moved in the expected direction: letters (1.8-2.1), stories (2.1-2.7), to learn (2.4-2.9) to express feelings (2.3-2.8). The fourth graders' increased use of writing supports Calkin's findings (1986) that children need to choose their form, audience, and subject in order to make writing a personal task (p. 6). The increase reaffirms the previously cited research (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983) which stated that writers need an audience other than a teacher.

Furthermore, for several months the fourth graders drafted, revised, edited, illustrated and finally published their own picture books for kindergartners. The increased interest in writing stories by the fourth graders supports the research completed by Atwell (1987), Calkins (1986), Graves (1983), and Routman (1988) who found the act of publishing to be crucial to the development of young writers and their perception of themselves as writers.

Table 4

Attitudes toward Uses of Writing Fourth Grade Students

N=17

	Pre-Program		Post-Program	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I write letters...	1.8	(.78)	2.1	(.64)
I write stories...	2.1	(.86)	2.7	(.92)
Writing helps me learn	2.4	(.94)	2.9	(.90)
Writing helps me express my feelings	2.3	(1.2)	2.8	(.75)
Like to write rather than read	2.0	(1.1)	2.4	(1.2)
Leave notes...	2.4	(.94)	3.0	(.87)
Keep a journal...	2.5	(1.5)	1.9	(1.1)

(Almost always = 4; Often = 3; Sometimes = 2; Almost never = 1)

The fourth graders wrote in personal journals in school daily. This study provides no evidence to explain the reason for a decrease in the use of personal journals at home by the end of the study. It is possible that there was more interest in using a journal earlier in the year because it was a new experience for many of the students.

Attitudes toward the Writing Process

In this section, the perceptions of the children toward the writing process will be reported and discussed by the two grade levels.

Second Grade. According to Table 5, the most significant changes made by the second graders were in their attitudes toward making revisions and choosing their own topics; they went from a consistent 1.0 (Almost never) for revising and selecting their topics to 3.4 and 3.9 (Almost always) respectively.

It is very likely that at the beginning of second grade, most of the children, if not all, had no knowledge of the words "revise" or "topics." For this reason, it is possible that they replied "Almost never" when asked their attitude toward revision and choosing topics. The post-program results, however, suggest the writing workshops had a positive influence on second graders' understanding of revision and choice of topics.

The children's positive responses to selection of their own topics agrees with Calkins's research (1986). Calkins found it is essential for children to write about what is important to them. It is, she says, through these choices that children achieve ownership and responsibility for their writing (p.6).

The second graders did not like what they wrote in April (3.2) as much as they had at the beginning of the study (4.0) and were less willing to share their writing in class. It is difficult to ascertain the specific reasons for these changes since this result is the opposite of the behavior which was observed in the classroom. By April it was more usual for most of the class to eagerly volunteer to read their stories.

While there was an indication of some lessening of their perception of the teacher as the most important reader (3.6-3.3), the majority of second graders continued to perceive the teacher as the most important reader. This is probably an extension of the teacher's authority in all other areas of the curriculum.

Table 5

Attitude toward the Writing Process: Second Grade Students

N=15

	Pre-Program		Post-Program	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I revise...	1.0	(.00)	3.4	(.63)
Like topics I choose...	1.0	(.00)	3.9	(.35)
Teacher most important reader	3.6	(.63)	3.3	(.88)
Share writing with family and friends	2.9	(1.1)	3.1	(.96)
In class, like to share	3.0	(1.0)	2.6	(.99)
Should learn to write sentences before stories	3.3	(1.2)	3.3	(1.0)
Like what I write	4.0	(1.0)	3.2	(.94)

(Almost always = 4; Often = 3; Sometimes = 2; Almost never = 1)

Fourth Graders. As shown in Table 6, the most signifcant changes noted for the fourth graders were their increased interest in sharing their writing with others (from Sometimes to Often) and their decreased dependence on the teacher as the most important reader (Often to Sometimes). These changes suggest an acquisition of an improved level of self-confidence. These findings agree with the research compiled by Krendl (1987), Calkins (1986), and Graves (1983). They too found that the writing process instilled confidence and self-esteem in their students.

The results show these fourth graders revised more often by the end of the study (2.0 or Sometimes to 3.5 Often +). According to Donald Graves's findings (1983), children learn when they have opportunities to make decisions about their writing. His research supports this positive change about revision.

Only one item showed some decrease, but still stayed in the Often range (3.4-3.0). It was the one that asked the fourth graders whether they liked the topics that they chose for themselves. This slightly more negative attitude toward choosing their own topics, may be the result of these children recognizing that not every topic leads to the satisfaction of a published piece of writing.

Table 6

Attitudes toward the Writing Process: Fourth Grade Students

N=17

	Pre-Program		Post-Program	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I revise...	2.0	(1.2)	3.5	(1.0)
Like topics I choose...	3.4	(.93)	3.0	(1.2)
Teacher most important reader	3.0	(.87)	2.7	(.85)
Share writing with family and friends	2.7	(.98)	3.2	(.81)
In class, like to share	2.6	(1.1)	3.2	(.97)
Should learn to write sentences before stories	1.9	(1.2)	3.2	(1.0)
Like what I write	3.1	(.99)	3.2	(.90)

(Almost always = 4; Often = 3; Sometimes = 2; Almost never = 1)

Results and Discussion: Parents' Responses

In this section, the results of the pre- and post-program surveys completed by the parents will be reported and discussed under the clusters into which the items were grouped. Also, the post-program evaluation of the components done by the parents will be reported. Since there were no appreciable differences between the responses of the second and fourth grade parents, the means of both parents' scores on the items will be discussed together. (Complete tables for each grade level for each cluster may be found in Appendix G.)

Parents' Uses of Writing

Table 7 contains composite means (pre- and post-program and grade level) on the parents' responses about their uses of writing. Since no big changes were noted from pre- to post- program, only salient across-trials' and across-groups' means appear in Table 7 and will be discussed.

The most frequent uses that these parents reported for writing are notes to family (3.0+ or Often+), letters to friends and family (2.5 or Sometimes+), and notes on what is read (2.0 or Sometimes). The least frequent uses that these parents reported are letters to public figures (1.9), stories/plays/poems (1.6), and jounals (1.5). It appears that writing is used mainly for every day utilitarian purposes. Very few use writing to persuade, to reflect on their own daily routines, or to entertain via literary modes.

The parents consistently attested to the importance of writing in peoples' lives by giving high scores of 3.5 (close to Almost always) to the two items "Writing helps me learn" and "Writing is important for expressing feelings."

Table 7

Parents' Uses of Writing

N=37

Most frequent uses:	
Notes to family	3.0+
Letters to friends, family	2.5
Notes on what is read	2.0
Least frequent uses:	
Letters to public figures	1.9
Stories, plays, poems	1.6
Journals	1.5
Responses to selected items:	
Writing helps one learn	3.5
Important for expressing feelings	3.5

Almost always = 4; Often = 3; Sometimes =2; Almost Never=1

Parents' Perceptions of Self as Writers

Table 8 reports the means for the items in the cluster about perceptions of self as writers. Again, because all four means are so similar (see Apppendix G), composite means of the means will be used to describe the parents' perceptions of selected items. Generally, they think well of themselves as writers since the means for the two items ("I like what I write" and "I feel confident expressing ideas in writing") hover around the Often rating (2.9). Supporting this satisfaction are the low ratings (1.7 or Almost never+) accorded to items, "I avoid writing" and "My mind goes blank when I start to write."

These parents see themselves as careful writers since they "reread" and "revise" what they write Almost always (3.6 and 3.5 respectively).

Parents' Perceptions of How Writing Should Be Taught

Table 9 contains the means for the items dealing with teaching theory and practice. In this case, since change may be seen between pre- amd post-programs means for combined second and fourth grade parent scores, means combined by grade level will be reported for selected items.

Table 8

Parents' Perception of Self as Writers

N = 37

Like what I write	2.9
Confident expressing ideas in writing	2.9
Avoid writing	1.7
Mind goes blank when I start to write	1.7
I reread what I write	3.6
I revise what I write	3.5

Almost always= 3; Often= 3; Sometimes= 3; Almost never = 1

For three items, scores moved in the expected direction: after the program, parents expressed less preference for having children write on teacher topics (1.7 to 1.4); they saw less value in formal grammar study (3.1 to 2.7); and they saw spelling as less important (2.3 to 2.0). From the beginning, these parents showed considerable sophistication by consistently giving the item, "Correctness is more important that content," an almost never (1.6) rating.

Reinforcing the importance these parents accord to writing was the 3.7 or Almost always rating they gave the item, "Writing should be an important part of every course."

Parents' Perception of Child's Writing

Table 10 summarizes the means for the items about how parents perceive their child's writing. As in the last section, means combined by grade levels will be discussed for selected items.

While the parents liked what their children wrote Often+ (3.4) before the program, they became even more positive about their writing after the program. Almost always or 3.7 was the post-program mean for "I like what my child writes." This may have been fueled by the very successful "Celebrate Writing" night held at the close of the project. Comments from parents were universally positive, e.g. "Interesting and well organized."

Table 9

Parents' Perceptions of How Writing Should Be Taught

N = 37

	Pre	Post
Prefer teacher topics over student topics	1.7	1.4
Studying grammar formally helps improve writing	3.1	2.7
Many spelling errors, lower grade	2.3	2.0
Correctness is more important than content	1.6	1.6
Writing should be an important part of every course	3.7	3.7

Almost always= 4; Often = 3; Sometimes = 2; Almost never = 1

According to scores on the items "I correct most errors in my child's writing," parents correct errors only Sometimes (2.5). Again, parents showed how they valued writing by according the item, "Good writers do better in school," a 3.3. or Often+ rating.

Parents' Evaluation of Program Components

According to Table 11, the parents found the components ofthe program Helpful to Very Helpful, with writing workshop receiving 3.5 and 3.7 ratings and the newsletter a 3.4 rating.

Although the positive attitudes of parents were clearly noted in the results of the surveys, it was the individual comments made by parents that further verified the success of the program. The following are some of the comments made regarding the writing workshops.

I feel more at ease with my writing and know that it doesn't have to be perfect.

Gave me the experience to actually learn how writers come up with stories and sit down and write...

The background on the development of speech/writing in a child, (the stages) was new to me.

I liked the emphasis on the children and that they are able to fully express themselves on what they are familiar with and want to write about.

Enjoyable and stimulating

Table 10

Parents' Perceptions of Child's Writing

N = 37

	Pre	Post
Like what my child writes	3.4	3.7
Correct most errors in child's writing	2.7	2.5
Good writers do better in school	3.2	3.3

Almost always= 4; Often = 3; Sometimes = 2; Almost never = 1

Table II

Parents' Evaluation of Program Components

	N	Mean	SD
Writing Workshop			
Parents of Fourth-Graders	18	3.5	(.53)
Parents of Second-Graders	19	3.7	(.44)
Newsletter			
Parents of Fourth-Graders	18	3.4	(.65)
Parents of Second-Graders	19	3.4	(.77)

(Very Helpful = 4; Helpful = 3; Of Some Help = 2; Of No Help)

The Parents' responses to the newsletters were also very supportive.

I liked the format and style as well as excerpts from the children's writing.

I liked the newsletters; they kept parents involved.

Newsletters kept us posted on events if we missed a workshop.

Very informative on the purposes of the workshops.

Good examples-I like to keep up with what's going on.

The Parents' reactions to the Celebrating Writing during the Author's Day presentation were especially signifcant because they reflected an appreciation of the children's success. One parent wrote, "I learned about my son's hidden talent!", while another parent observed, "It was great to see each student had such an enthusiastic feeling about writing and sharing."

The comments made by these parents are not unique. When Reggie Routman (1988) introduced a parent involvement program in which parents were encouraged to visit the classroom to observe and participate in the daily reading and writing activites, she received similar supportive reactions. One parent wrote, "My experiences with publshing children's books has transformed the way I regard volunteer work, adult-child projects, and student-teacher relationships" (p.110).

Conclusions

Some conclusions about parents' and children's responses are offered.

Parents There was great consistency in the way the parents responded to the 37 items on the survey over time. Except for a few items (about four), there were no big changes in the parents' attitudes and perceptions from pre-to post-program. This could be because these parents were already quite sophisticated about the writing process and practices. Also, perhaps it takes more than two workshops, three newsletters, and one authors' night to effect further change. Nevertheless, the instrument appears to have great reliability in that parents' responses, recorded approximately six months apart, were so similiar.

Parents were certainly positive about writing in general, about the program components, and with their children's writing, specifically.

Children The results of the study show that the children in both grades increased their interest in using writing for various reasons. The second graders were most interested in keeping journals, as well as writing letters more frequently. Meanwhile, the fourth graders "left notes" more often. Both groups also increased their interest in writing stories.

In addition, the children expanded their knowledge of the writing process. While both second and fourth graders revised more often by the end of the study, the second graders also enjoyed choosing their own topics. As the fourth graders wrote for varied audiences, there was a decrease in their perception of the teacher as the most important reader.

The results of this study showed the children used writing in a variety of ways. These experiences and their knowledge of the writing process added to their perceptions of themselves as writers.

CHAPTER 5

Summary

To help parents of second and fourth graders understand how writing is taught, two writing workshops were offered. Parents also received three follow-up newsletters which reviewed the various stages of the writing process. These newsletters included samples of the children's writing and suggested ways that parents might help their children with their writing. At the end of the project the parents' and children's stories were published, then celebrated at an Author's Day presentation, April, 1990.

Both parents and children completed attitude surveys at the beginning and end of the seven month project. These surveys yielded information on the attitudes of the children and parents toward the uses of writing, the writing process, how they perceived themselves as writers, and in the case of the parents, how they thought writing should be taught.

Conclusions

The results of the surveys completed by parents of the second and fourth graders showed little change, but a high degree of consistency. This could be as a result of the

short time frame (seven months) between the initial and final attitude surveys. The pre- and post-program surveys of the parents revealed positive attitudes toward their children's writing. Parents also maintained a positive perception of themselves as writers. Those items in which there was evidence of some change since the intial survey was administered, (e.g. Writing is improtant for expressing feelings), were even more positive by the end of the project. The parents also rated the writing workshops and the newsletters as "Helpful" to "Very Helpful." Their individual comments reported in the final evaluation of the program supported these ratings.

The results of the children's survey were more dramatic. For example, the second graders indicated that they revised their writing "Almost never" in September, but by April they revised their writing "Almost always." They indicated a similar change in their attitude toward choosing their own topics. In addition, the second graders had a more positive attitude toward writing letters, stories and keeping a journal by the end of the project.

While the fourth graders' interests in "using writing" moved in a positive direction, it was "writing stories" and "leaving notes" that showed the most significant growth.

With their widened uses of writing came new audiences. For example, by April, the fourth graders indicated that they liked to share their writing with family, friends, and their classmates "Often" instead of only "Sometimes", and by this time, the teacher became a less important reader than she was at the beginning of the study.

Like the second graders, the fourth graders showed positve growth in their ability to revise. By April, they indicated that they were revising "Often" compared with "Sometimes" in September.

From these results it can be concluded that the attitudes of parents and children toward writing were positively affected by participation in this project. In addition, the writing workshops and newsletters proved to be successful because parents found them informative and very helpful. The parents' willingness to volunteer to help publish the children's writing and/or work in the classroom during writing workshops in the future was another benefit and indication of the positive feelings evoked by the program.

Recommendations

To Teachers

The study's results indicate the importance of providing an educational program designed to inform parents about the writing process and the teaching of writing. Therefore, teachers should recognize the parent as a coeducator who can play an equally important part in a child's education. Next, teachers need to plan the parent involvement program carefully and include parent participation at the early stages of planning. If teachers are to build better relationships between home and school, we must learn the concerns of parents and address those issues. Most of all, it is important to let parents know how important their role is in the educational process of their child.

If teachers wish to use the attitude survey included in this study, they may want to ask fewer questions. One of the 37 questions that should be eliminated asks the parent to decide whether he/she would rather spend his/her time reading or writing. (Their is an identical question included in the children's attitude survey which also should be omitted.) Because both the reading and writing processes upport one another, it is not necessary to ask the respondents if they prefer one over the other.

At the end of the project we found that parents were willing to volunteer their time to work in the classroom. From the literature presented earlier, it would seem that this is the next viable step toward making better connections between home and school.

To Administrators

As the "leaders" in the school community, it is of particular importance that administrators serve as models for parents, teachers, and children through their expression in the belief that writing is an important part of the educational process. Toward this objective, we recommend that administrators participate in the writing workshops that are conducted for the parents, as did the principal in this study. His participation in the workshop clearly showed that he supported the efforts to build a better connection between home and school. When he shared his writing during the conferencing session and subsequently published his story along with those by the parents and teachers, he reinforced his role as "leader" in the education community.

To the Parents

The literature and the results of this study verify the importance of parents as coeducators. The parent workshops not only offered parents "inside" information on how

teachers taught writing, but the parents' participation gave them an opportunity to support the importance of writing. The parents in this study, like all parents, were influential models for children. This point was made by a parent who reported that her son, upon returning home from the Author's Day celebration, stayed up late that night to read each story in the parents' book. Her reaction to her son's interest in the parents' book was, "I wish I had finished my story."

From the positive reactions by participants in this study, it is our hope that more parents will be given opportunities to play active roles in the education of their children <u>within</u> the school environment. Along with this invitation must come the willingness of parents to get involved.

The long-term effects of the involvement of parents, teachers, and administrators as coeducators and role models upon children who are learning to write is not known at this time. However, the results of this study strongly suggest that there were many benefits for all who participated and should encourage other such projects in the future.

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Name _____ Sex: M ____ F ____

Date _____

WRITING ATTITUDE SCALE FOR PARENTS

For each item, circle your response.

1.	I write better than I speak.	Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never
2.	When I have free time, I prefer writing to reading.	Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never
3.	Studying grammar formally helps students improve their writing.	Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never
4.	I accept positions in groups that involve writing.	Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never
5.	I leave notes for members of my family.	Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never
6.	Girls and women enjoy writing more than boys and men.	Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never
7.	Students who write well generally do better in school than those who don't.	Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never
8.	If paper has many misspellings, it should receive a low grade.	Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never
9.	I revise what I've written.	Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never

20. Doing workbook exercises helps students improve their writing.

Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never

21. Someone who writes well is more successful in the world than someone who doesn't.

Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never

22. I like what my child writes.

Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never

23. Writing is a very important way for students to express their feelings.

Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never

24. I write better than I read.

Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never

25. If a paper is sloppy in appearance, the teacher should give it a lower grade.

Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never

26. I reread what I've written.

Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never

27. Writing helps one to learn.

Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never

28. I write letters to my family and friends.

Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never

29. Correctness is more important than content in student writing.

Almost always — Often — Sometimes — Almost never

Name _____ Sex: M ____ F ____

Date _____

WRITING ATTITUDE SCALE FOR STUDENTS

For each item, circle your response.

1.	I write letters to my family and friends.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never
2.	I write stories and poems.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never
3.	I revise what I've written.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never
4.	I like topics I choose myself.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never
5.	I use writing to help me learn.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never
6.	I like what I write.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never
7.	Writing is a very important way for me to express my feelings.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never
8.	When I have free time, I'd rather write than read.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never
9.	I leave notes for my family and friends.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never

APPRAISAL SURVEY
BY PARENTS

DIRECTIONS: Please help us to evaluate our efforts to inform parents about our writing program. Circle the number that reflects your estimation of each item's helpfulness to you.

Very Helpful 4 Helpful 3 Somewhat Helpful 2 Of No Help 1

Please note the zero (0) indicates "unable to judge."

1. The writing workshops. 4 3 2 1 0

COMMENTS: (What did you like/dislike?)

_____

_____

_____

2. The newsletters 4 3 2 1 0

COMMENTS: (What did you like/dislike?)

_____

_____

_____

In the future, would you be interested in helping to publish the children's writing or work in the classroom with students?

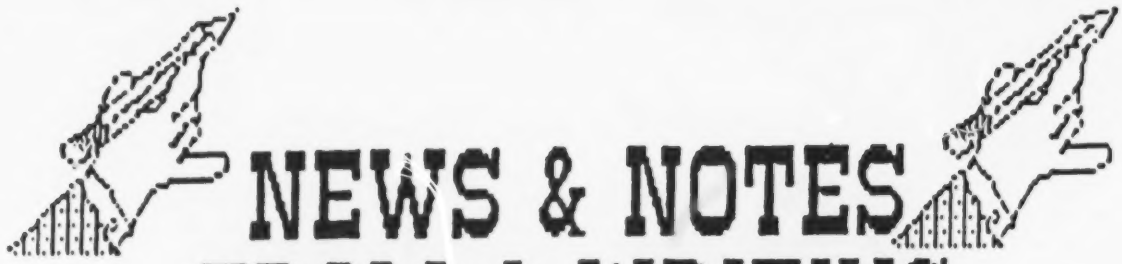
_____

Thank you for your participation and support of this program.

BY
SPECIAL
INVITATION

YOU ARE CORDIALLY
INVITED TO ATTEND A
WRITING WORKSHOP
ON WEDNESDAY,
OCT. 18, 1989
AT 7:30 PM
IN ROOM 14.

PRESENTED BY:
MISS BARBARA JONES,
MRS. GERRY WAHLERS
AND
DR. JOAN FEELEY



NEWS & NOTES FROM A WRITING WORKSHOP

IT'S A LAUNCH

BY

Gerry Wahlers

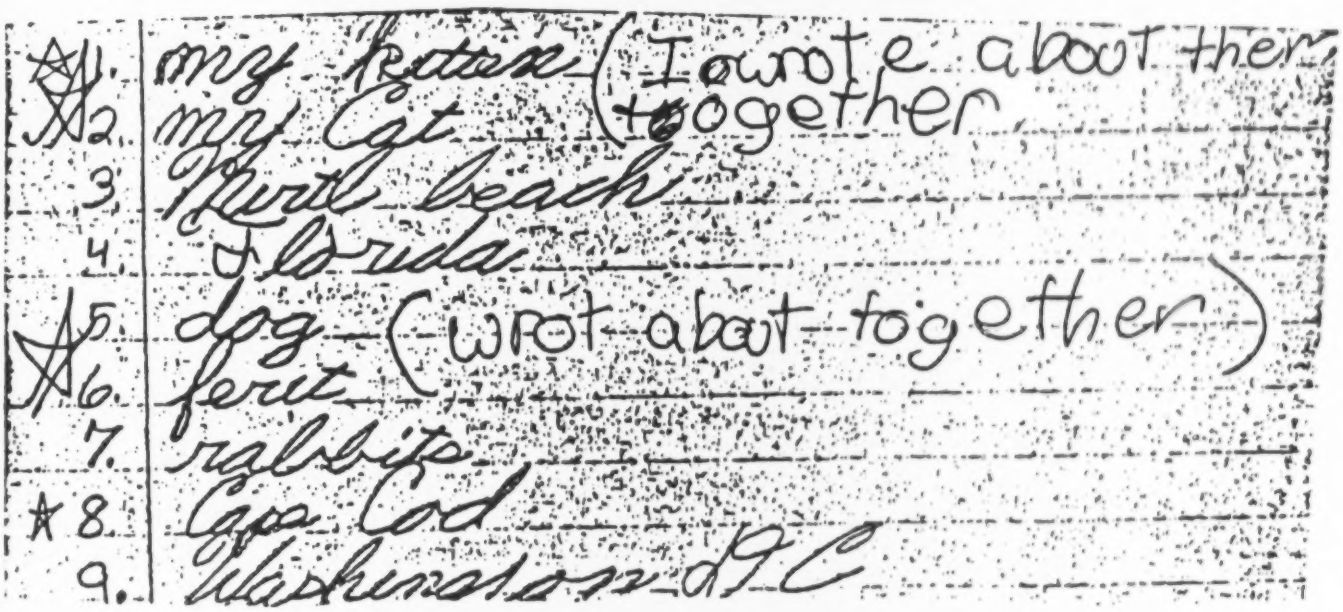
Dr. Joan Feeley of William Paterson College, along with Barbara Jones and Gerry Wahlers, second and fourth grade teachers at the K. D. Malone School, launched the first of two writing workshops for parents on Wednesday, Oct. 18, 1989. The purpose of the workshop was to share with parents how the writing process is taught, answer questions about the process approach, and offer suggestions on how parents as coeducators can help their children become better writers.

This first workshop focused on how writers get their ideas or topics for writing. Rather than assign a topic, the presenters shared how they drew upon their personal experiences for ideas. Their topics included: a family pet, a memorable vacation, a favorite pastime, a special celebration, and an untimely investment in the stockmarket. The parents then listed their topics. Later, everyone selected one topic from his or her list and wrote for about five minutes.

By the end of the workshop parents carried home their writing folders, a list of topics, and the beginning of a first draft. When the second writing workshop convenes in February, parents will return with a draft and proceed through the next writing stages.

Parents who were unable to attend the first workshop are cordially invited to participate in the second session. Writing folders will be available from their child's teacher during conferences.

The following are examples of topics chosen by second and fourth graders:



10.	Soft Ball
11.	hermit crabs
12.	Gold fish
13	Chickens
14.	Gymnasticks
15	Camping

Topics

1. riding
2. my doll
3. family
4. pets ✓
5. jumprope
6. collect
7. runing
8. farmming
9. badmitton
10. friends ✓
11. school
12. swim

Watching Children Gain Control over Written Language

Did you ever think about how easily and marvelously children learn to speak the language of their homes? In the first years of their lives, they go from babbling to saying one- or two-word utterances that amuse and thrill us adults around them. That first "Da-" and "Mama" are proud benchmarks in their development. We celebrate when we hear "muk" for "milk" and encourage speech by saying what we believe they mean, e.g. "Jamie wants milk?" "Good boy, here's your milk." We don't correct with "Say milk, m-i-l-k."

If you can think back, these early approximations soon approach standard form. My three-year-old grandson Brian used to call me "Mama" but, after hearing his mother and father say, "It's Grandma on the phone," he has started to call me "Grandma." When he was two, he asked, "Peese-may-I-have (one word) pokicle?" Now he requests his favorite treat, a "popsicle." All these changes came about naturally, through hearing standard models and trying out his own language, not through adult corrections.

While we accept these patterns as children first learn oral language through natural interaction with language users, we tend to expect perfect standard spelling as children move into using written language. Current research on how children develop as writers has shown that they move through stages (if we encourage them) and "invent" spellings as they try to approximate how adults write down language.

Some children begin to write by scribbling and telling you what the marks mean. Some begin by drawing pictures that tell their stories. As soon as children know a few letters (usually those in their names), they may use these letters to "write" their ideas, stringing them along a line with breaks occurring here and there. Again, they will "read" these strings as though they did stand for speech sounds. This stage is called "pre-phonemic."

If young children are exposed to print by being read to and by having adults tell them what print in our environment stands for, they will begin to "invent" spellings that may track the sound system (early phonemic stage). They will write beginning sounds, e.g. "B" for "baby" and soon add more consonants, e.g. "cr" for "car." We should encourage these early attempts and ask them to read what they have written. (If they draw pictures to go with these first tries, it helps us-- and them-- to read back!)

As they learn to read and experience more direct exposure to written language, children will gradually add vowels to their spelling, moving into the "later phonemic stage." Five-year-old Marisa wrote about her friend "France" (Frances): "She is peting" which means "She is painting." We know because she has drawn her friend at an easel with paintbrush in hand. What does Marisa show us about her development? We can see that she knows some consonant sounds, "p" and "t," and an ending, "ing." She also knows that there is a vowel ("e" = "ai") in the word even though she's not sure which one!

Soon children are in a transitional stage in which their writing will contain many standard spellings along with invented spellings. To encourage them to try to write their thoughts, we must not stress perfect spelling at draft stages. Rather, we tell them to get their thoughts down and then read them back to other children and to us. Often when they do this, they will make corrections or, at least, will circle words that don't "look right" to them. If children want to edit pieces for publication (class books or display), we will help them rewrite drafts so that they appear as close to standard form as possible for individual children.

In writing-as-process classrooms, the focus is on the process, how writers go from getting the ideas in their heads down in written language. We know from research that this is not an easy, direct, error-free path but rather a time-consuming, circuitous series of starts and stops, sharings and revisions. Therefore, we have to allow time for children to write, encourage them to write about their own experiences because that's what they really have in their heads; we have them share their pieces with each other and revise according to the suggestions received. If the piece is important to the writer, we will help in editing it to standard spelling and mechanics. Only at this point is the product in focus. In this workshop approach, children get plenty of practice in writing and grow in their control over written language. And most regard themselves as writers who love to practice their craft!

Dr. Joan T. Feeley
William Paterson College

PICTURE BOOKS AS A SPRINGBOARD TO WRITING

BY

Barbara Jones

In second grade we compare a book to a parade. A parade is an orderly procession down the street while a story is an orderly procession of events. For example, the author, Evaline Ness, in the first paragraph of her book Sam, Bangs and Moonshine begins with a variety of images to spark one's imagination.

> "On a small island, near a large harbor, there once lived a fisherman's little daughter (named Samantha, but always called Sam), who had the reckless habit of lying."

Once the children are aware of the setting, then the plot begins to unfold. The setting of this story is on an island. It also establishes Sam's problem of lying.

The author uses the actions of the characters and events in the story to develop the plot until the problem is solved. The children can readily identify with Sam's problems. They should notice that the little white lies in the beginning do not hurt anyone but as the story progresses Thomas pays the price of Sam's lying.

This event is the turning point of the story. It is when Sam finally realizes the difference between "Real" and "Moonshine". Sam learns that "Moonshine" can lead to serious trouble. It almost cost her friend's life.

Through discussion the children begin to realize the author's plan of action. They learn that every book has a beginning, middle and an end. A story includes characters, events, plot, setting, theme and resolution.

Besides reading picture books for enjoyment the children are exposed to new vocabulary that they can use when writing. In addition they begin to understand how stories are written. These picture books become a wonderful model for their own writing.

Writing at Home

Read aloud to your children.

Talk to them about their ideas and experiences.

Take an interest in their writing.

Let your child see you write often.

Provide opportunities at home for your child to write.

Make sure that your child has a comfortable place to write.

Encourage him or her to write for information, free samples and travel brochures; as well as letters to friends and family. They can write messages and thank-you notes.

Many family activities offer opportunities for purposeful writing.

Celebrate your child's efforts at writing.

Ideas from National Council of Teachers of English

CROSS OUR HEARTS

WE WANT YOU...

TO JOIN US,
WITH OR WITHOUT A
FOLDER AND 1ST DRAFT,
FOR A WRITING WORKSHOP
ON TUESDAY
FEBRUARY 15, 1990
AT 7:30 PM
IN ROOM 14.

*SNOW DATE: WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 14, 1990

Table G-1

Attitudes Toward the Use of Writing: Parents of Second Graders

N=19

	Pre-Program		Post-Program	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Prefers writing to reading	1.5	(.77)	1.8	(.71)
Accepts positions that involve writing	2.5	(.96)	2.3	(1.1)
Leaves notes for family	2.9	(1.1)	3.1	(.94)
Keeps notes on what is read	2.0	(1.1)	2.1	(.96)
Letters to public figures	1.8	(.90)	2.0	(1.1)
Writes stories, plays, poems	1.8	(1.2)	1.5	(.86)
Writing important for expressing feelings	2.6	(.96)	3.0	(1.0)
Keeps a journal	1.6	(1.0)	1.4	(.71)
Letters to family and friends	2.5	(1.1)	2.5	(1.2)
Girls/women enjoy more	2.5	(.80)	2.3	(.57)
Good writers more successful in world	2.9	(.74)	2.6	(.78)
Writing helps one learn	3.5	(.61)	3.6	(.60)
Important to students to express feelings	3.4	(.69)	3.6	(.50)

(Almost always = 4; Often = 3; Sometimes = 2; Almost never = 1)

Table G2

Attitudes Toward the Use of Writing: Parents of Fourth-Graders

N=18

	Pre-Program		Post-Program	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Prefers writing to reading	1.5	(.79)	1.7	(.73)
Accepts positions that involve writing	2.1	(1.0)	2.2	(.86)
Leaves notes for family	3.3	(.84)	3.2	(.65)
Keeps notes on what is read	2.0	(1.0)	2.3	(1.1)
Letters to public figures	1.9	(.96)	2.1	(.87)
Writes stories, plays, poems	1.3	(.84)	1.4	(.98)
Writing important for expressing feelings	2.3	(1.1)	2.4	(1.0)
Keeps a journal	1.7	(.84)	1.6	(.78)
Letters to family and friends	2.3	(.89)	2.4	(.80)
Girls/women enjoy more	2.4	(.61)	2.3	(1.0)
Good writers more successful in world	2.8	(1.3)	2.9	(1.0)
Writing helps one learn	3.2	(.70)	3.5	(.79)
Important to students to express feelings	3.4	(.62)	3.6	(.62)

(Almost always = 4; Often = 3; Sometimes = 2; Almost never = 1)

Table G 3

Perception of Self as Writer: Parents of Second Graders

N=19

	Pre-Program		Post-Program	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Write better than speak	2.5	(.84)	2.3	(.75)
Like what I write	3.0	(.82)	3.0	(.97)
Write better than read	2.3	(1.0)	2.3	(.93)
Would enjoy submitting writing to magazines	1.7	(.89)	1.9	(.99)
Confident expressing my ideas in writing	3.1	(.96)	3.0	(.94)
Like seeing my thoughts on paper	2.8	(1.1)	2.9	(1.1)
Discussing my writing is enjoyable	2.2	(1.1)	2.4	(1.2)
I avoid writing	1.3	(.49)	1.6	(.96)
Mind goes blank when I start writing	1.4	(.50)	1.6	(.76)
Nervous about writing	1.6	(1.0)	1.6	(.77)
I reread my writing	3.8	(.54)	3.6	(.90
I revise my writing	3.6	(.76)	3.7	(.56)

(Almost always = 4; Often = 3; Sometimes = 2; Almost never = 1)

Table G 4

Perception of Self as Writer: Parents of Fourth Graders

N=18

	Pre-Program		Post-Program	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Write better than speak	2.7	(.96)	2.8	(.86)
Like what I write	2.7	(.97)	2.8	(.92)
Like to write better than read	1.9	(.70)	1.7	(.97)
Would enjoy submitting writing to magazines	1.7	(1.0)	1.8	(1.1)
Confident expressing my ideas in writing	2.7	(1.1)	2.9	(.94)
Like seeing my thoughts on paper	2.6	(1.0)	2.8	(1.1)
Discussing my writing is enjoyable	2.0	(1.1)	2.2	(1.0)
I avoid writing	1.9	(.87)	1.9	(.71)
Mind goes blank when I start writing	1.7	(.81)	2.1	(.87)
Nervous about writing	1.8	(1.0)	2.8	(1.0)
I reread my writing	3.6	(.70)	3.6	(.79)
I revise my writing	3.3	(.91)	3.4	(.78)

(Almost always = 4; Often = 3; Sometimes = 2; Almost never = 1)

Table G5

Perceptions of How Writing Should Be Taught: Parents of Second Graders

N=19

	Pre-Program		Post-Program	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Should learn to write sentences before paragraphs	2.6	(1.1)	2.2	(1.0)
Studying grammar formally, helps improve writing	3.4	(.77)	3.1	(.88)
Workbook exercises help improve writing	2.9	(1.1)	2.7	(1.0)
Correctness more important than content	1.6	(.60)	1.6	(.96)
Many spelling errors, lower grade	2.3	(.58)	2.0	(.67)
Sloppy appearance, lower grade	2.2	(.65)	2.0	(.70)
Teacher most important audience	2.8	(.78)	2.4	(.62)
Prefer teacher topics over student topics	1.7	(.73)	1.4	(.50)
Writing should be important part of most courses	3.7	(.49)	3.5	(.62)

(Almost always = 4; Often = 3; Sometimes = 2; Almost never = 1)

Table G-6

Perceptions of How Writing Should Be Taught: Parents of Fourth Graders

N=18

	Pre-Program		Post-Program	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Should learn to write sentences before paragraphs	2.4	(1.1)	2.2	(.99)
Studying grammar formally helps improve writing	2.8	(.96)	2.3	(.89)
Workbook exercise helps improve writing	2.5	(1.1)	2.5	(.99)
Correctness more important than content	1.7	(.59)	1.5	(.71)
Many spelling errors, lower grade	2.3	(1.0)	2.0	(1.0)
Sloppy appearance, lower grade	2.8	(1.1)	2.2	(1.2)
Teacher most important audience	2.4	(.62)	2.6	(.98)
Prefer teacher topics over student topics	1.6	(.61)	1.4	(.51)
Writing should be important part of most courses	3.7	(.46)	3.7	(.57)

(Almost always = 4; Often = 3; Sometimes = 2; Almost never = 1)

Table G 7

Perceptions of Child's Writing: Parents of Second Graders

N=19

	Pre-Program		Post-Program	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Like what child writes	3.2	(.73)	3.8	(.42)
Correct most errors in child's writing	2.7	(1.1)	2.4	(1.0)
Good writers do better in school	3.3	(.81)	3.1	(.83)

(Almost always = 4; Often = 3; Sometimes = 2; Almost never = 1)

Table G 8

Perceptions of Child's Writing: Parents of Fourth Graders

N=18

	Pre-Program		Post-Program	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Like what child writes	3.6	(.62)	3.6	(.70)
Correct most errors in child's writing	2.6	(.80)	2.6	(.86)
Good writers do better in school	3.2	(.81)	3.4	(.86)

(Almost always = 4; Often = 3; Sometimes = 2; Almost never = 1)